

The concept of guerrilla warfare in Lithuania in the 1920-1930s

Jokubauskas, Vytautas

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Jokubauskas, V. (2012). The concept of guerrilla warfare in Lithuania in the 1920-1930s. *Baltic Region*, 2, 32-43.
<https://doi.org/10.5922/2079-8555-2012-2-4>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

THE CONCEPT OF GUERRILLA WARFARE IN LITHUANIA IN THE 1920—1930s

V. Jokubauskas*



This article analyses the military and tactical training of the members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union for guerrilla warfare in the interwar period. Small nations, such as Lithuania and other Baltic states, being unable to build up military strength in order to ensure national security, were forced to seek for unconventional methods of warfare, including guerrilla strategies. The study places emphasis on the development of the guerrilla war concept in the Union periodicals. The author retraces a change in the intensity of the guerrilla warfare concept propagation amongst Lithuanian population and riflemen, in particular, through publications in the Trimitas — a periodical of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. The author also identifies the narratives associated with the guerrilla matters employed for propaganda purposes in order to create an image of a guerrilla as a defender of the Homeland — Lithuania. Additionally, the structure and numbers of the Union are analysed through a comparison with similar organisations of the other «small nations» of the Baltic North-East. The author addresses the issue of military missions planned by the Lithuanian Army, as well as the way riflemen implemented them. Since the Union did not only offer military training, but was also engaged in the patriotic propaganda, the article focuses on the network of cultural institutions, homes of riflemen, orchestras, libraries, choirs, and athletic clubs used by the Union. The article sets out to establish whether the loss of Lithuanian sovereignty could have been possible without giving rise to a protracted guerrilla war.

* Klaipėda University
84, Herkaus Manto, Klaipėda,
LT-92294, Lithuania

Received on February 12, 2012.

doi: 10.5922/2079-8555-2012-2-4

Key words: guerrilla warfare, Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, paramilitary organisations, military strategy

*Si vis pacem, para bellum*¹ — the famous phrase of the Roman historian Cornelius Nepos is relevant to any historical period. Military strategists of different countries often ask the question as to what measures should be taken to ensure the victory in the eventual war. The most efficient method is to avoid an armed conflict when achieving the goals formulated by the government. In the countries, where the geopolitical doctrine is justified by the aspiration to safeguard sovereignty and territorial unity, the most adequate method of curbing external expansion threats is, of course, the tactic of military intimidation. The doctrine of military intimidation is the first choice of states that boast vast mobilisation, tactical and technical resources. However, as to small states, it is seldom the case. Naturally, it is sometimes possible to produce an intimidation effect through the synergy of military potential of individual states, but this alternative requires the establishment of intergovernmental military and defence alliances. Moreover, the doctrine of military intimidation can rest on the concept of an “armed nation”, i. e. guerrilla warfare.

The idea itself has been widely known for centuries. As the political philosopher Carl Schmitt stressed, as early as in the first decades of the 19th century, guerrillas fought with the first modern large-scale army — the forces of the first French Empire — in Spain and Russia and, to a lesser extent, in Austria. As we know, the tactics of a guerrilla war made it possible to achieve relatively positive results, and its elements are used up until today [3]. According to the historian Martin van Creveld, in case of an armed conflict between countries with different military powers, the defence tactics of the weaker party should rest on the natural obstacles of the fortification which will compensate for the military superiority of the opponent. Another possibility is to avoid a decisive battle and use the tactics of ambushes, unexpected attacks, retreats, trying to seize a military initiative, since a showdown fight would result not in a victory, but a bloodbath. At the same time, the author emphasises that the weakness of a defending party becomes its strength, since a mere ability to survive is a prerequisite for a victory, whereas, for a strong party a war with a weak opponent means a defeat. The longer such a war lasts, the more opportunities for a victory there are for the weak party, and the more likely it is that the strong party will suffer a defeat [2].

Hence it follows that one of the most rational decisions is to adopt the concepts of a “small war” and consistent introduction of guerrilla tactics elements into the military training. This concept was harmonised with the military doctrine of the Lithuanian army in 1920—1930. This doctrine can be described as follows: Lithuania will be involved in a war in case of a large-scale conflict in Eastern Europe, its army will retreat and intern with the government in a friendly country. At the same time, riflemen will wage a guerrilla war in the occupied territory of Lithuania, waiting for the liberation of the country by victorious allies [1].

This article analyses the issue of security of Lithuania in the 1920s-30s, more precisely, the application of the guerrilla war concept. The study sets

¹ If you wish for peace, prepare for war.

out to identify what structures of the Lithuanian forces prepared for guerrilla warfare and how they did it, since the question about the *reason behind it* — if one is aware of the geopolitical situation of the pre-war Lithuania [11] — does not require a further discussion. This article focuses on the question as to what consequences a guerrilla training brings about in case of an invasion.

There are just a few historiographical works dedicated to the issue of development of the guerrilla war strategy in Lithuania. They can be divided into two groups. The first one brings together the works reviewing guerrilla actions of riflemen — members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union (LRU) in the wars for the Lithuanian independence (1919—1920), during border clashes with the Polish forces in 1921—1923 which took place in the vicinity of the neutral zone between Lithuania and Poland, especially during the seizure of the Wilno region — a territory also known as Central Lithuania (Pol. *Litwa Środkowa*) — by Polish troops [9; 12; 14; 24]. The second group is comprised by the works analysing the military functions of the LRU [8; 21; 22]. One must admit that the Lithuanian historiography lacks studies paying special attention to the issue of the influence exerted by the pre-war experience and possible scenarios of guerrilla tactics on the actions of the Lithuanian armed resistance of the 1940s.

The Lithuanian Riflemen's Union: structure and numbers

The LRU was founded in 1919 to defend the civilian population from the plunder brought by the Workers and Peasants' Red Army, the Polish Army, the West Russian Volunteer Army, and individual looters. The LRU was formed on the basis of self-organised guerrilla units. During the war for the Lithuanian independence, the guerrilla movement involved approximately 0.75 % of the Lithuanian population [8]. Until the liquidation of the LRU on July 11, 1940, the principal elements in the structure of the Union were independent platoons and companies, which acted autonomously bringing together LRU members from individual settlements, towns or — in case of big cities — factories, cooperatives, public institutions, and city quarters. Thus, the LRU was a territorial, network-based, and autonomous structure; the membership was voluntary and was encouraged by patriotism. An important feature of the Union was that it could maintain its viability even after the elimination of the headquarters and a formal liquidation of the organisation itself. The platoons and companies of the LRU, which brought together people who lived nearby, knew each other well, or were even related by kinship, could communicate even if the territory was occupied by the enemy forces.

The LRU followed the territorial principle; riflemen of each district comprised a unit (lit. *rinktinė*²), which was not a military or tactical, but merely an administrative entity. Thus, combat missions were carried out not by territorial units, but by independent platoons and companies of the LRU. In 1940, there were 22 such units, one of them — the 22nd territorial unit of

² The word *rinktinė* is translated into English as *team*, but in this context it rather means *territorial unit*.

railway employees was active across the country. Territorial formations included approximately 1200 platoons; in cities, they were sometimes united into companies. Thus, the number of individual units was smaller — 872. Rural and small town residents accounted for approximately 70% of the LRU [12]; thus, platoons were often located at considerable distances and were not large in numbers.

Of course, the scope of resistance could depend on the numbers of the LRU, but there are two additional aspects to consider. The first one is the number of military trained people who could fight and train new recruits of guerrilla units. The second one is the support for combatants provided by local residents which was of great importance for the success and protraction of resistance. There is no doubt that the support of local residents plays a decisive role in the success of guerrilla warfare. It is *a priori* clear that the more members of the LRU there are, the more support it will receive from the society due to strong social ties, sometimes even without sharing their beliefs. The family circle of each rifleman — in the pre-war Lithuania a family consisted of 4.7 people [23] — included parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives. Theoretically, it is possible to suppose that a small part of the country's population, which was involved in the LRU, could enjoy the support of the majority of Lithuanians; 2.79% of LRU members (table 1) through family³ and mostly through other social connections could draw into the organisation approximately 1/8th of the population of the pre-war Lithuania.

Table 1

Trends of the LRU numbers in 1919—1940

Year	Number of units	Combatant	Non-combatant	Total	Population, mln people	The share of LRU members, %
1919	39	—	—	800	~ 2	0.04
1921	—	5224	3160	8384	~ 2	0.42
1922	—	4628	4070	8698	~ 2	0.43
1923	—	—	—	10 546	2.14	0.49
1924	321	9757	4490	14 247	2.176	0.65
1925	370	11 748	5568	17 316	2.204	0.79
1926	436	11 313	6955	18 268	2.228	0.82
1934	—	28 478	—	—	2.476	—
1935	—	24 976	8300	33 276	2.5	1.33
1940	872**	48 107	20 000	68 107	2.443*	2.79

* Including the Wilno region — 2.925 mln people.

** Historiography suggests that in 1940 the LRU consisted of 1200 platoons.

Sources: [8, p. 55—56; 23, p. 126; LCVA, f. 929, ap. 3, b. 560, l. 66.; LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 408, l. 1.; Kardas, 1937, N 13, p. 315].

³ Of course, it is only a theoretical speculation, since some riflemen belonged to the same families.

Of course, these data cannot answer the question as to how much the contingent of the LRU could extend. This answer requires an analysis of the data obtained in Lithuania and other similar states of the Baltic region — Latvia, Estonia, and Finland. I will compare the data on paramilitary organisations active in these countries in 1939—1940 according to three parameters: 1) absolute numbers; 2) the share of the organisation members in the population; 3) the density of combatant members in the country's territory. Firstly, we will find out what military potential (personnel) the organisations of the north-western part of the Baltic region, which were quite similar and gravitated to the guerrilla movement, had. Secondly, we can answer the question as to how large was the organisation's support among the population. Thirdly, we will acquire a better understanding of the density of guerrilla units that could be mobilised in case of a war.

A comparative analysis shows that Finnish paramilitary organisations were the largest in terms of numbers, followed by the organisations of the smallest of the countries in question — Estonia, whereas Lithuania ranks third (table 2). But having compared the density of combatant members (i.e. the number of potential guerrilla combatants), one can see that Lithuanian and Estonian contingents are two-three times as large as those of the other countries. It means that the number of combatant members of the LRU was sufficient to wage intensive guerrilla warfare across the territory of Lithuania, which would also make it possible to exert at least a limited control over the territory and the population. According to the calculations, the optimum number of combatants for guerrilla defence in Lithuania was 30—50 thousand people⁴, i.e. approximately 0.5—0.8 guerrillas per 1 km² of the country's territory [4], thus, 48 107 combatant riflemen would be enough to comprise a rather dense guerrilla movement network in 1940.

Table 2

The numbers of paramilitary organisations in 1939—1940

Country	Population, mln people	Territory, km ²	Combatant members, people	Share in the population, %	Density of combatant members, people/km ²
Lithuania	2.443	52 822*	48 107	1.97	0.91
Latvia	1.995	65 791	31 874	1.6	0.48
Estonia	1.134	47 549	42 673	3.76	0.9
Finland	3.7	383 150	119 500	3.23	0.31
<i>Total</i>	9.272	549 312	242 154	2.61	—
<i>Average</i>					0.44

* in 1923—1939, the Lithuanian territory, including the Klaipeda region, (2848 km²) was 55 670 km²; since the end of 1939, including the Vilnius region (6909 km²), and excluding the Klaipeda one, it was 59 731 km².

Sources: [8, p. 58]; Pētersons, A. 2007, *Krustugunīs : latviešu karotmāka 1940—1945: 60 gadus no tautas slēptais*, Rīga, p. 114—115.; Raukas, A. (ed.). 2008, *Estonija : encik-*

⁴ The calculations were performed in the 1990s for the territory of the post-war Lithuania — 65 300 km².

lopedicheskij spravochnik [Estonia: An Encyclopaedic Reference], Tallin, p. 54.; Jowett, P. 2006, Snodgrass B. Finland at War 1939—45, Oxford, p. 18; 25—27; 29.

It is worth noting that approximately one half of combatant riflemen were reservists, and, in case of mobilisation, would be commissioned into regular forces of the Lithuanian Army, which, in 1940, consisted of 125—150 thousand soldiers divided into five infantry divisions and other cavalry and artillery units [1]. At the end of 1934, 28 478 combatant riflemen, among whom 344 were reservist officers, 10 697 first class reservists (37.56%), other riflemen (17 781 people), who were armed with 7438 rifles and 20 light machine guns [25, l. 1], did not only have to stay within their units and ensure the security of the army's rear, but also had to wage guerrilla warfare in the occupied territory. Almost six years later, in 1940, the number of the first class reservists among the riflemen increased to 19067 or 39.63% of the total contingent of combatant riflemen; i.e. it changed only by two percentage points in comparison to 1934. At the time, the LRU had 27 478 rifles, 3160 handguns, and 378 light machine guns [8]. Such an amount of small arms was enough for the rest of 29 040 combatant riflemen.

Moreover, since the LRU was supplied with weapons by the army, which had a surplus of rifles and light machine guns in 1940⁵ [6, l. 11], in case of necessity riflemen could urgently receive extra weapons from the army's supplies. It is worth adding that the LRU units located in vicinity of the borders were equipped better and earlier.

An important factor affecting the collaboration between the Lithuanian society and the LRU was a large scale of the organisation's activities, which were not limited to military training only. Over two decades of its functioning in Lithuania, the LRU created a network of cultural institutions: in 1939, 72 homes of riflemen, 125 choirs, 417 amateur theatre companies, 105 orchestras, and 350 libraries were operating in Lithuania. There were also a large number of sports teams and different courses. The LRU also included a large network of fire brigades; for example, in 1939, there were 4352 riflemen in 175 fire-fighting brigades [12]. It is worth noting that, in the pre-war Lithuania, especially in the province, social and cultural life was closely connected to the LRU and the riflemen's initiatives.

The promotion of the guerrilla warfare concept in the LRU's *Trimitas* newspaper

Over 20 years — from 1920 until 1940 — the LRU published a weekly newspaper entitled the *Trimitas*; in 1939, 25,000 copies were issued weekly, which made it a rather popular newspaper in comparison to other peri-

⁵ The Lithuanian army had 137 500 7.92 mm calibre rifles (and 96.6 mln cartridges), whereas it required only 100 825. Moreover, there were 10 thousand other calibre rifles with 1.9 mln cartridges; 3755 7.92 mm calibre light machine guns, whereas only 2558 units were required.

odicals of the pre-war Lithuania. The newspaper publication made it possible not only to promote patriotic ideas, but also to ingrain the guerrilla war concept in the minds of the riflemen. There are data suggesting that not less than 75 % of riflemen in each platoon had a subscription to the *Trimitas* [20].

In 1924—1940, 852 issues of the weekly newspaper were published. An analysis of the available 766 issues (89.9 %) makes it possible to state that the notions relating to guerrillas and a guerrilla war are used in different contexts in 416 issues (54.3 %), which shows that this topic is “outstripped” only by two other subjects — the problem of the Vilnius and Klaipeda regions. One can identify several key topics discussed in the newspaper: the history of guerrilla actions in Lithuania in 1918—1923; propaganda, agitation and tactical recommendations aimed at the preparation for an imminent war; guerrilla training of riflemen; pages of Lithuanian history. Moreover, the newspaper published some information about successful guerrilla warfare in other countries, namely, in China against Japan, Ethiopia against Italy, and others. It is indicative that these texts presented guerrillas as heroes, defenders of their motherland. It did not only shape the image of guerrillas in different countries (of course, excluding Poland), but also developed the attitude that, despite greater numbers of the enemy force, guerrilla warfare can be successful.

A General Staff Colonel, Stasys Raštikis, the future commander of the Lithuanian Army, in 1933 published an article, which was consistent with the general tone of the newspaper and that stated that each rifleman should be not only a patriot, but also a person always ready to wage guerrilla warfare (even acting on his own). This idea, as S. Raštikis maintained, was supposed to be explained to riflemen in a language that everyone could understand [20, 1933, № 5, p. 85]. In 1937, the Lithuanian Minister of Defence, Brigadier General Stasys Dirmantas, said at a LRU meeting, “study military disciplines with zeal, especially the practical aspects of guerrilla warfare” [20, 1937, № 10, p. 220]. The concept of a guerrilla war was also supported by the LRU commander, Colonel Pranas Saladžius, who emphasised that guerrillas could hold for a long time in an occupied territory, since they rely not on assailable military bases, but on their home farms, families, and patriotism [20, 1937, № 25, p. 581].

An analysis of the *Trimitas* articles (see fig.) shows that the intensity of exploiting the guerrilla topic increased for the first time in 1929. It did not lose popularity over the following years; however, the chart shows a downward trend. Nevertheless, since 1934, the number of issues mentioning guerrillas or guerrilla warfare suddenly doubled and was increasing until 1939. The first increase probably relates to certain attempts to encourage a conflict with Poland, whereas the mid-1930 growth seems to stem from the deteriorating international climate in the region and S. Raštikis's ascendancy to the position of the commander of the Lithuanian Army.

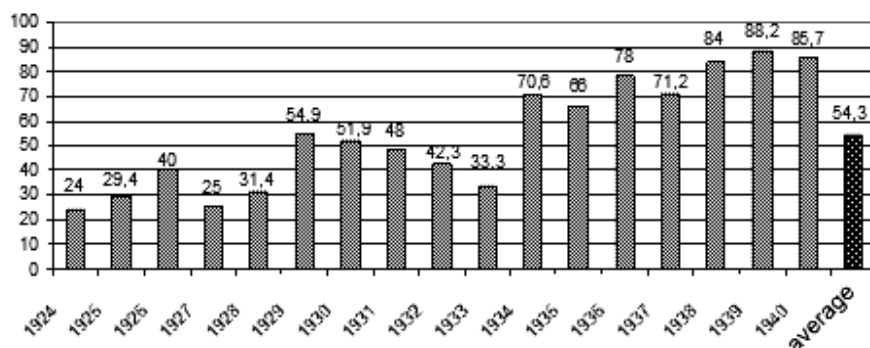


Fig. The percentage of *Trimitas* issues (1924—1940) covering the topic of guerrillas and guerrilla warfare, %

Military plans and training

As early as in 1924, i.e. a year after the demobilisation of the Lithuanian Army, the local press published an appeal to form in case of a war guerrilla units consisting of 60 combatants. They were expected to act independently, hiding in the woods during the day, avoiding open hostilities, and setting ambushes at night [20, 1924, № 192, p. 19]. There was even a suggestion that, in case of a war, all able-bodied men had to get to the woods and form guerrilla units. In rural areas, which were home to 4/5 of the Lithuanian population at the time, the remaining women and children had to provide for themselves, not unlike the guerrilla units consisting of 40—60 men, who had to supply themselves with provisions, arms, and ammunition through acting drastically and robbing the enemy's transports and warehouses. It would be difficult for the enemy to locate such small groups in the occupied unfamiliar territory [20, 1924, № 195, p. 16].

In 1926, the chief of the Lithuanian Army's headquarters, General Staff Colonel Kazys Škirpa, planned that, in case of a war, it would be necessary to organise large-scale guerrilla warfare in the enemy's rear and thus support regular troops [21]. The head of the LRU agreed that such actions on the side of the riflemen are possible, but added that the guerrilla units would require officers and NCOs [13, l. 14]. Riflemen were trained to form guerrilla units; as early as in the 1920s, the idea of an "armed nation" was not strange to them [20, 1926, № 40, p. 1275]. The Lithuanian Ministry of Defence believed that the LRU structure is important for the country's defence system not only as an instrument of fuelling patriotism among citizens, but also as a military unit. Riflemen were supposed to be prepared to defend the borders in case of a war and secure the mobilisation and concentration of regular troops. It was believed that riflemen would not replace regular troops, but would be able to fight against the enemy and thus support the army. Riflemen were also to be used in the rear services. Guerrilla riflemen were supposed to operate in small groups or individually in a familiar territory, to have a decent knowledge of cartography, and to be ex-

cellent snipers [20, 1926, № 37, p. 1180, 1192]. In view of the above criterion, in 1926, the LRU published a collection of lectures on guerrilla warfare [14, p. 110].

Of course, the Lithuanian top officers did not only develop theoretical concepts, but also made meticulous preparations. In 1926—1936, 2852 second lieutenants graduated from the military college specialising in training reserve officers [7, p. 354]. This college also paid a significant attention to guerrilla tactics training, since the Lithuanian borders were of significant length to eventual enemies, the army was small, and considerable parts of the border had to be defended through guerrilla attacks carried out by small units. This was the focus of training of future officers [10, 1930, № 11, p. 166].

In 1928, during autumn manoeuvres in the Kėdainiai district, local riflemen commanded by a retired officer, imitated the formation of a guerrilla unit and "seized" the headquarters of the cavalry regiment that played the part of the enemy — the Polish army [20, 1928, № 39, p. 1267]. In a similar way, guerrilla attacks were enacted in the course of manoeuvres with the participation of several riflemen platoons from the neighbouring districts. Such manoeuvres were performed on October 20, 1929 in the Marijampolė district [20, 1929, № 45, p. 754]. Similar field training exercises were organised in the next few years [20, 1930, № 16, p. 318; 1935, № 6, p. 108; № 10, p. 182; № 14, p. 256; 1939, № 18, p. 430; № 45, p. 1102]; regular army units also took part in them [20, 1936, № 11, p. 260]. Guerrilla riflemen learned in practice the tactics of seizing different settlements. During the manoeuvres performed on November 11, 1934 in the Panevėžys district, the guerrillas "took" the town of Smilgiai [20, 1934, № 47, p. 914]. Guerrilla manoeuvres were also performed at night, which was extremely important [20, 1934, № 40, p. 800]. In 1937 and 1938, riflemen participated as guerrillas in the large-scale autumn manoeuvres of the Lithuanian Army [8, p. 56].

Every year, new members joined the LRU, and they had to be trained not only practically but also theoretically. For example, in 1934 70% of combatant riflemen took part in manoeuvres, 75% participated in firearms training. In the same year, 4097 new members joined the LRU; all of them underwent military training and passed a test [20, 1935, № 7, p. 116]. Riflemen were also given theoretical lectures on guerrilla tactics [20, 1939, № 19, p. 453; 1940, № 14, p. 342], as well as such lectures as "Guerrilla warfare, discipline, and propaganda" [20, 1935, № 33, p. 599] which were necessary and yielded positive results.

It was clearly understood that the key to successful guerrilla warfare was the terrain. Forests (especially, coniferous), shrubbery, swamps, and hills were perfect for guerrilla warfare and could help escape the enemy's aviation, motorised or tank units, and artillery bombardment [20, 1939, № 28, p. 684]. Another important condition affecting the success of guerrilla warfare was the support of the local population without which a guerrilla war would be next to impossible [20, 1940, № 24, p. 585]. However, there was a clear understanding that in the given situation only guerrilla but not

trench warfare was feasible. There was a need for each citizen to understand the nuances and importance of guerrilla warfare. Each village, forest, and valley had to be capable of being turned into a “stronghold” [15, p. 191]. The prospect that in the future all Lithuanians would have to sustain a guerrilla war and provide for the combatants was not strange to the society. Moreover, there was a general understanding that combatants had to wear a uniform. Thus, in the eyes of the enemy they would look like an opponent that had to be treated according to the rules of an international humanitarian law [10, 1939, № 19, p. 489].

In 1935, a special law was adopted; in 1936, the LRU passed a statute which stipulated that riflemen not only could but also had to take an active part in organising military training, since, in the imminent war, they will be engaged in guerrilla warfare [20, 1936, № 31, p. 730]. The military commanders of rifleman platoons were appointed by the army headquarters; riflemen wore the same uniform as soldiers of the regular army. A clear chain of command, discipline and military training were identified as key priorities of the LRU [17, p. 399—406]. In the 1940s, there were 872 commanders of rifleman units in the ranks of the LRU, 404 of them were reserve officers, and 192 were former NCOs. So, more than 2/3 of the LRU command staff had undergone military training in the Lithuanian army. Moreover, many LRU members were police and border force officers and teachers [8, p. 55—56].

A 1938 instruction of the ŠADIR army headquarters specified that, in case of military actions, a part of riflemen had to stay in the enemy’s rear and wage guerrilla warfare [19, l. 12]. In 1940, the headquarters also followed this scheme. Guerrillas had to act in a familiar territory (woods and swamps), in small groups or individually, being armed with light weapons. These instructions were repeated in the statutes of the Lithuanian infantry and cavalry. Special guidelines were published for riflemen — *Guerrilla tactics* and *The features of riflemen’s tactics* [8, p. 58—61]. In case of an unexpected attack, the LRU members had to act on their own without further instructions from the central authorities [18, l. 31].

In the last days of peace in Europe, one of the Lithuanian military theorists of the time, a university military instructor, General Staff Major Vytautas Bulvičius described in his book the general attitude of the Lithuanian army to imminent warfare. Alongside the use of military potential of aviation and tanks, the author emphasised the importance of guerrilla movement, analysed warfare in the conditions of Lithuania, and identified those responsible for waging guerrilla warfare in case of an invasion. Of course, it was the riflemen [5, p. 97, 145]. One of the last instructions the LRU members received from the army headquarters is dated April 1940: the directive on the use of LRU forces in case of a war stressed that on the termination of warfare in the West, Germany could attack Lithuania, in this case riflemen were supposed to secure mobilisation; when retreating, they were supposed to destroy the infrastructure and defend crucial objects in the rear. Each rifleman left in the enemy’s rear had to wage guerrilla warfare [16, l. 44]. Thus, the Union was given the task of popularising the riflemen movement under the

slogan “*Sušaulinti Lietuvą*”⁶, which called upon large masses to join the Union and move closer to the ideal of an armed and patriotic nation [20, 1933, № 16, p. 302].

Conclusion

The experience of guerrilla warfare gained in the wars for the Lithuanian independence was not forgotten in the pre-war period. The concept of a guerrilla war was widely exploited in the public discourse through the press. The Lithuanian Army developed military plans, which gave riflemen unambiguous instructions on guerrilla warfare. The principal structure that prepared the general population for guerrilla warfare was the LRU. However, since 1935 the LRU was subordinate to the army’s supreme commander, one can state that there was a combatant structure preparing for a guerrilla war in Lithuania, which is important from the perspective of an international humanitarian law.

An active promotion of the guerrilla warfare concept in the *Trimitas* newspaper and preparation of riflemen for such actions in the pre-war years was carried out on a regular basis; however, one can identify peaks of such activities. One of them related to the 1929 Lithuanian-Polish conflict at the League of Nations, another (1934—1940) reflected the changes not only in the command of the Lithuanian army or its re-equipment, but also a change to the general military doctrine, which had included Germany in the ranks of “enemies”. It points to the fact that the high command of the Lithuanian Army responded to increasing military threats with an active preparation of the LRU for guerrilla warfare.

The semi-independent LRU structure ensured that, in case of an invasion riflemen could — and, according to the pre-war plans, were supposed to — wage guerrilla warfare without distorting its internal military structure. It means that in the 1920s-1930s, the general assumption was that, in the future, any aggressive territorial aspirations of the neighbouring countries could be contained only through protracted guerrilla warfare. Of course, in the pre-war years, all these measures were aimed against the eventual Polish and — since the 1930s — German aggression, i. e. against the countries, on which Lithuania did not, in effect, wage a war.

References

1. Jokubauskas, V. 2011, *Issledovaniâ Baltijskogo regiona* [Baltic Region Studies], no 2 (8), p. 27—49.
2. Kreveld, van M. 2008, *Transformacija vojny* [Transformation of War], Moscow.

⁶ A word-by-word translation of this slogan seems to be impossible; however, its general meaning is a call for militarising Lithuania, which suggested that the LRU should play an important role through physical and moral preparation for a war of not only riflemen, but also all residents of the country.

3. Schmitt, C. 2006, *Teorija partizana: Promezhutochnoe zamechanie po povodu ponjatija politicheskogo* [Theory of Partisan: Intermediate remark about the notion of political], Moscow.
4. Adamonis, S. 1997, *Partizanų karas (strategija ir taktika)*, Kaunas, Belovo leidykla.
5. Bulvičius, V. 1994, *Karinis valstybės rengimas*, Vilnius.
6. Ginklavimo turto stovio žinios 1940 07 01. *LCVA*, f. 3, ap. 1, b. 256, l. 11.
7. Jasevičius, A. et al. 2003, *Lietuvos kariuomenės karininkai 1918—1953*, T. 3, Vilnius.
8. Jokubauskas, V. 2011, Žvelgiant į ateitį: partizaninės kovos taktikos sklaida Lietuvoje ir jos įgyvendinimas 1944—1953 m. [Looking to the future: guerrilla tactics against the dissemination of Lithuania and its implementation in 1944—1953], *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no 1 (29), p. 51—68.
9. Jurevičiūtė, A., Veilentienė, A. 1998, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, no 6, p. 62—71.
10. *Kardas*, 1924—1940.
11. Laurinavičius, Č., Motieka, E., Statkus, N. 2005, *Baltijos valstybių geopolitikos bruožai XX amžiuje*, Vilnius.
12. *Lietuvos šaulių sąjunga valstybės ir visuomenės tarnyboje 1919—2004*, 2005, Sud. V. Kavaliauskas, J. Širvinskas, S. Jegelevičius, Kaunas.
13. LŠS viršininko 1926 05 31 raportas Vyriausiojo štabo viršininkui, *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 3, b. 560, l. 14.
14. Matusas, J. 1992, *Šaulių Sąjungos istorija*. Sud. A. Liekis, Vilnius.
15. Medelis, R. 1939, *Tautos mokykla.*, no 9, p. 191.
16. Nurodymai šauliams priedangai panaudoti 1940 04 16, *LCVA*, f. 561, ap. 18, b. 187, l. 44—48.
17. Raštikis, S. 1990, *Kovose dėl Lietuvos*, T. 1, Vilnius.
18. Šauliams mobilizacijos ir operacijų metu panaudoti nurodymai 1939 04 05, *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 3, b. 1028, l. 30—36.
19. Šauliams panaudoti direktyva ŠADIR, 1938 10 03, *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 3, b. 1028, l. 12—21.
20. *Trimitas*, 1924—1940.
21. Vaičenonis, J. 2001, *Darbai ir dienos*, T. 21, p. 131—176.
22. Vaičenonis, J. 2002, Lietuvos šaulių sąjunga Valstybės gynyboje 1935—1940 m. In: *Lietuvos šaulių sąjungos istorijos fragmentai*. Red. J. Vaičenonis, S. Dovydaitis. Kaunas, p. 110—119.
23. Vaitiekūnas, S. 2006, *Lietuvos gyventojai per du tūkstantmečius*, Vilnius.
24. Vareikis, V. 2004, Pasienio incidentai. (Lietuvos šaulių partizaninė veikla) [Border incidents. (Lithuanian Riflemen's guerrilla activities)], *Darbai ir dienos*, T. 40, p. 109—128.
25. Žinios apie šaulius ir apginklavimą, 1934 m, *LCVA*, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 408, l. 1.

About the author

Dr Vytautas Jokubauskas, Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Klaipėda University.

E-mail: pilsotas@yahoo.com